

## [Spanish Granite Worker]

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### SPANISH GRANITE WORKER

“Loyalist? That sonofabitch Franco, who wouldn't be a Loyalist? We're all Loyalist. My brother was killed fighting at [Teruel?]. My mother was killed by bombing in Madrid. My kid sister died on the way to the French border, starved to death, by Christ. If I had been back there I would've been dead too. I know it. I would've grabbed a gun and fought those bastards until they got me. I wanted to get into it. I had letters from home all the time. But I never could save enough money for passage fare. I can't save money. It burns my pockets. I get drunk and spend it all.”

Lopez was dark, gaunt and wild-eyed, with protruding false teeth and a hilarious laugh. Laughing and singing, Lopez hides his bitterness, lives his life with a brimming glass in hand, emptied to the music of his Spanish laughter. Ugly as a gorilla, Lopez still has in him something of the sunshine and a gayety of Spain, a Spain that now lies under the wreckage of modern warfare. C [??]

I worked the quarries of northern Spain before coming to this country. I came here for the adventure of it, I guess. Quincy was where I went from New York. But I didn't like Quincy. Stonecutters there told me about Barre. I quit my job, got a quart of whisky, and took a train out of North Station. I got goddamn good and drunk on that train. I woke up outside

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Montpelier. I had to ride that Gasoline Toonerville 2 Trolley to Barre. I felt awful by Christ that morning I hit Barre.

I was a stranger in Barre — but not for long. The first night I got in a poker game with Italian stonecutters. And we got drunk again too. I lost money so they liked me. Better than if I won. Later I won money plenty, but it was o. k. then. Everybody knew Lopez. Lopez knew everybody. It was nothing to get a job them days. Just walk into a shed. They ask what you do, you tell them, they put you to work.

In Spain I cut stone by hand. When I got here they had the new machinery. I learnt to use the sandblast. A fellow took me in and learnt me. A Spanish fellow who knew people I knew back home. It's not so bad to learn. The power shivers your arms. Your whole body shivers. But it ain't too bad...

In the strike in 1921 I got in jail. We had a big fight. We jumped this bunch of Frenchmen and we kicked the living hell out of them. I broke one fellow's jaw. By Jesus I felt the bone give under my fist. Then one of those French bastards hit me over the head with a club or something. It knocked me out cold. I woke up in jail. I didn't start the goddamn fight but they pinched me. I was the only one got pinched. I got off o. k. though, a fine of ten-and-costs. Ten bucks was nothing then. But right now ten bucks is plenty money, by God. Plenty money.

I never married. I like the girls as well as anybody, but not to marry. You don't have to marry them. I have too 3 much fun with the boys. There's a good gang around Barre-Montpelier. They have a damn good time, get along o. k., raise hell, insult each other, play tricks on each other, drink, laugh, sometimes fight, but all in good fun. I don't think there's no place like it is around here.

Probably the people, the people that call themselves nice, say we're a tough bunch. But we don't care about that either, or about them. They drink just as goddamn much as we do, only they keep out of sight in their homes. And they sleep with each other's wives, their

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office girls, somebody anyway, probably a goddamn sight more that we do. They're worse than we are, I think. People like that I got no use for. We may be rough and tough, we swear a lot, drink a lot, and we don't hide what we do. We got blood in our veins instead of water. We do a man's work and lead a man's life. Maybe we're wild, maybe we're crazy... At least by God we're alive — while we live.

Lots of fellows I know have quit the stone business. Afraid. One guy never even came back after his tools. But most of us stay in it once we get started. What else you going to do? You learn a trade, you work ten-fifteen years at it, it's all you got, ain't it? You make enough money to pay your way. It's better money than you can get on any other job. Even if you don't always get full time in.

I have a good time anyway. I ain't kicking and I ain't scared. I like to go to all the games — football, basketball, baseball. I got an old Dodge, it ain't much of a car, 4 but it goes. I load it up with a gang and we go to the games. In the summer there's swimming and dances out at the lakes, carnivals and fairs to go to. All the time there's gambling if you want it, there's bowling and movie shows and poolrooms, I'd rather be here than a big city. I'd rather be here than any place, I guess. The Spain I knew ain't no more, that's all.

We had some refugees here this spring, you know that? One of them knew my brother. He had been fighting with my brother over there. He was at Teruel when my brother got it. He didn't like to talk much about it though. I don't blame the fellow. It must've been a hell of a thing. He didn't see my brother get it. He saw him after. Machine guns, I guess. Anyway he got it quick and clean. I felt better knowing that much... The Immigration came after those fellows and took them. Some sonofabitch squealed probably. I don't know what they did with them. Some say they deported them; others say they're holding them. I don't know. It seems for chrisake they could leave them alone after all they been through already.

It makes me so goddamn made when I think about that war. About [Franco?] and Hitler and Mussolini, three sonofabitches. I want to get my hands on their throat. I'll bet you their

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goddamn eyes pop out if I get these hands on them. I'd like to be locked up in a room with the three of them. And see who comes out... It wouldn't be one of them bastards, I'll tell you that much. 5 But it don't do no good to get burned up. It's better to have another drink and forget that stuff. And be glad you're here instead of over there.

I'm the only one in my family left now. There's another brother somewhere but nobody knows where. Or whether he's living or dead. He ran away from home a long time ago. We never heard from him again. He was wild like the rest of us only wilder.

I get along with Italians here as well as I do with my own people. Most of them feel like we do about Fascism and all that. I get along all right with most everybody. Some of them think Lopez is crazy. All of them think Lopez don't give a damn for nothing. Always laughing, always singing, always happy. Maybe, maybe... But they don't see inside. They ain't supposed to. They ought to know sometimes a man laughs loudest when he feels the worst.

Yes, we got a Spanish Club here. Every Sunday we go there, play cards, drink, talk, shoot the dice. Most of the men are married with families. They like to come there to get away from their wives and the kids yelling. It's a place for men to come and talk men's talk. They talk baseball and prize-fights, politics here and over across, stonecutting. They watch the girls go by dressed up for church. It's nice to look at them but they don't want them where they are. They go there to get away from women.

No matter what happens I'll keep on laughing. And I'll keep on cutting stone as long as there's stone to cut. Those 6 two things are all I got, see? Laughing and working. While I got them I can't lose, can I? You're goddamn right I can't lose. And people say: "There goes Lopez, the crazy happy fool." And maybe they're right. But only Lopez really knows about that.